X-MEN: RONIN®

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LIMITED SERIES

5 OF 5

TORRES
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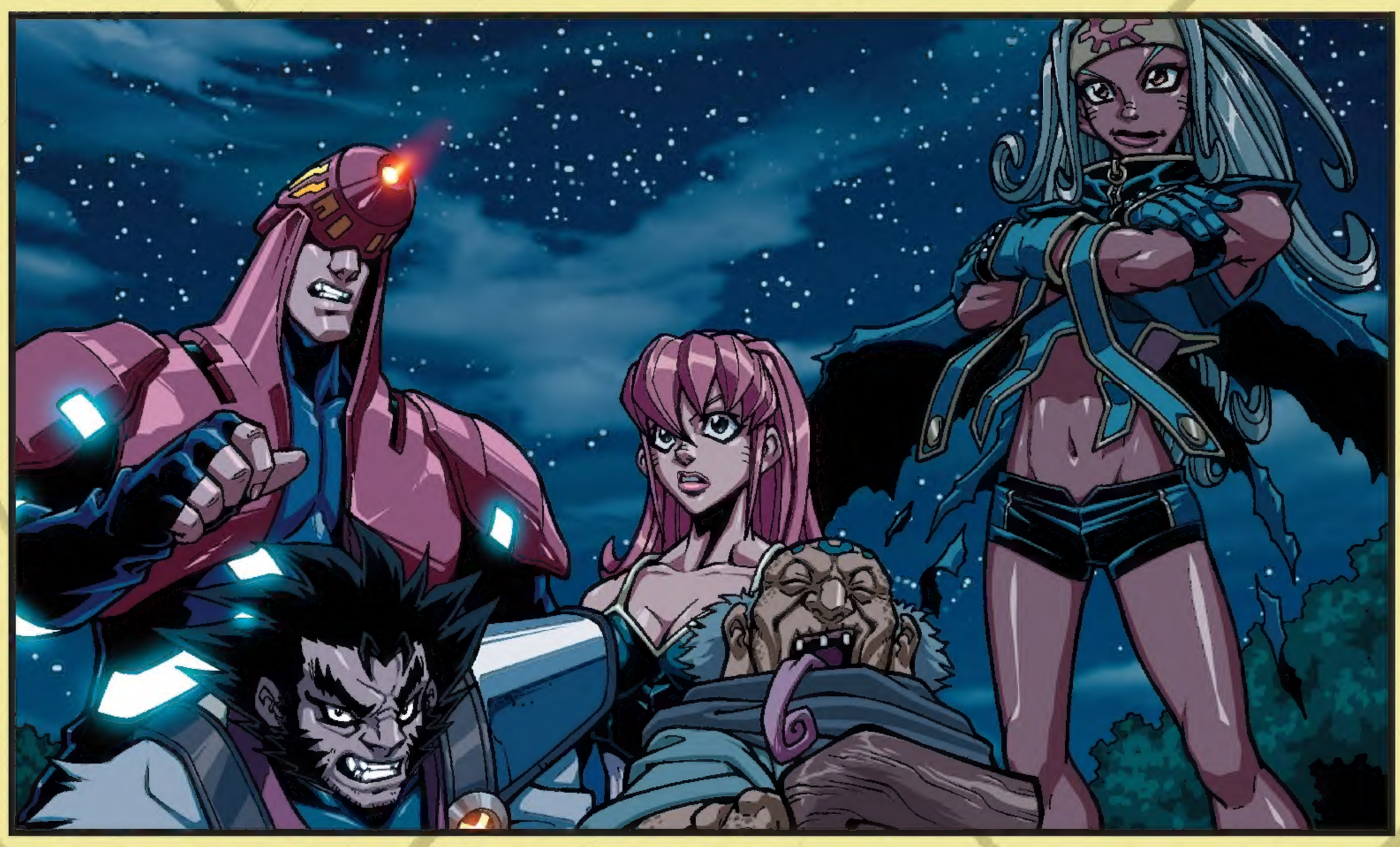
X-MEN: RONIN

PART FIVE: SHIMA (Zone of Death)

Who are the X-Men?

The X-Men are a mutant team dedicated to preserving the peace between mutants and humans, and protecting the world from those mutants who believe their genes make them the rightful inheritors of the Earth! They are... Wolverine (Logan), Samurai Slasher! Cyclops (Scott Summers), One-Eyed Warrior! Storm (Ororo Munroe), Weather Witch! And Marvel Girl (Jean Grey), Sultry Psychic!

Emma Frost, a powerful mutant telepath, has tried to recruit Jean Grey for the exclusive mutant Hellfire Club -- so Frost could secure her own promotion in the club's ranks. The X-Men defeat her hired thugs easily, but things take a turn for the worst when Emma convinced the local police that the X-Men are a band of marauding monsters! With the city seized by anti-mutant hysteria, Chief of Police Yoshida sends out Sentinels, giant human-piloted robots, to take down the X-Men, and one of them is piloted by Storm's boyfriend, Forge! The X-Men rush home to protect Jean, who was left alone to guard the captured thugs, but they find out she was more than capable of defending herself... the captured thugs are dead at her hands! Jean's powers threaten to go wild until the X-Men's teacher, Master Toad, helps her control them. She is then able to defeat the attacking Sentinels single-handedly! But now the X-Men are homeless, their headquarters destroyed in the battle...



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Over here! I found someone!

Too late... he's dead.

All of them are dead?

None of our pilots survived, Chief Yoshida.

And the Sentinels?

Destroyed, sir.

Then we rebuild.

And we must recruit again.

Elsewhere...

Try again.

Come on, Jean... you can do it.

Everyone possesses a Chi, a life force.

In us mutants that energy is powerful and manifests itself in uncanny ways.

It shapes us, forms our being, gives us our superhuman powers...

Some of us have learned how to focus our Chi, concentrate it in a special manner.

Concentrate, Jean.

Focus it into one area.

Control it.

I... I can't...

Sorry, Master Toad... I just can't...

Elsewhere...

I can't believe it! The X-Men are... they're heroes! But the media's reporting that they're fugitives from the law...

And cop killers.

You there!

Don't move.

But... but we weren't doing anything wrong, officer.

This one... she registers positive.

You are to come with us for questioning.

Stop!

What the heck is going on?

Around The City...

Girls, Girls, Triple

Dazzlers

At Master Toad's Lair...

Each mutant signature is distinct. The mutant Chi is quite discernible from that of a Homo Sapien. I know the difference between the energy it radiates compared to that of someone who is not a mutant...

And this energy I am sensing within Jean... it's neither Homo Superior nor Homo Sapien in origin.

Then what is it?

I do not know.

But she is not controlling it.

But in the battle against those robots... you helped her use this force to save us.

All I can tell you is that the energy builds up inside of her. And it needs to be dispelled after a time. You saw the result of her unleashing it.

Neither of us meant for all that to happen. Or knew that it would.

And what happens if this energy isn't released?

Hey, what are you talking about in here?

Tea?

Um... Master Toad?

You've got a visitor, sir.

SNIKT!

It's all right, Logan.

She's a friend.

Betsy! Long time no see, child!

Toad-sensei, I wish this reunion were occurring at a happier time.

So you have heard of the plight of the X-Men. We have yet to discuss a resolution, but if you have come to help--

Sensei... the police are rounding up every mutant they can. They say it's for questioning, but they've yet to release anyone arrested. And any who resist...

There are reports of several deaths already.

Later, in the city...

I've already told you...

You're mistaken! We're not mutants!

My go-yo lantern tells me otherwise, freak.

Sam!

Paige!

AIEEEE!

FIOOOOM!

Leave us alone!

Well, these two don't seem to need our help.

You! You're the X-Men, aren't you?

This is all your fault!

Ororo and I will continue this way, round up whomever we can, and meet you back below in a couple of hours.

Jean, you come with me. There's one person who might be able to fix all of this.

Psylocke, bring the kid and his sister back to Toad's.

Come, children, I'll explain everything. Trust us. We have to get out of here before more officers arrive...

And if she won't cooperate?

Then she won't make it through the night.

The Hellfire Club...

A lovely night for a party, Charles.

Yes, Cerebra chose the date. She's... good at predicting the weather and all that.

Who's he talking to?

Jason Wyngarde. Another criminal "mastermind".

I don't like the looks of him.

He's from one of the local families, Emma.

By family do you mean blue-bloods or mutant syndicate?

Both.

The honorable Shiro Yoshida!

Well, look who's come to sleep with the enemy.

Shiro Yoshida, it is an honor to meet you.

Thank you for the invitation, Professor. I just wish this gathering could have coincided with less... stressed times.

Oh, I'm sure you have everything under control. I for one am not worried about this... mutant uprising. Your reputation precedes you.

As does yours, Professor.

We will have things to discuss later?

Yes, away from all these prying eyes and pricked-up ears.

Where are you going, Emma?

He obviously doesn't really want to involve us in any of his business dealings, Tessa! He wants to keep us out of the Inner Circle!

What makes you say that?

He hasn't even introduced us to any of his new... associates!

If we're to "rule by his side", shouldn't we be meeting these people?

The night is young, Emma. We haven't even had dinner yet. Come back inside and have a drink.

No. I'm going for a walk. I need some air!

What is it, Cerebra?

And friend.

Jean Grey!

I told you what I do to freaks who sneak up on me, right?

And I warned you of the same thing. Time to see who's right.

What do you want with me? Why did you do all of this?

I only wanted to invite you into a little social club, dear. I want to see you moving in the right circles. Associating with lesser-evolved beings will only lead to your demise.

It's kind of like natural selection, really. The humans are afraid of the freaks. They will try and kill all the freaks. In the process, they'll decimate their own ranks. That will leave people like you and me-- homo sapiens supreme-- to be the ruling class, as it were.

Figures. It always starts with some megalomaniac wanting to be king of the world.

In my case...

...Queen!

I brought my shield. Where's yours?

You can still stop everything you've set in motion by turning yourself in to the cops!

That can be arranged.

Ha! Over my dead body!

So you're suggesting a kind of "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" type of arrangement?

More like "you stay off of my back and I'll stay off of yours".

More like a threat, Xavier?

No, Yoshida-san. Not a threat. Just good advice.

For mutants in our current positions.

Father!

Not now, Tessa.

But, Father... Emma!

I sense something's wrong... I think she's... oh, Father... Emma...

I know, Tessa. But not now.

I'm sorry... where were we?

We were about to discuss your club helping fund my new robotics project...

We might have discussed a deal...

She wouldn't have it.

We could have found a way to force her to...

No.

Did you have to...

Yes.

Now what?

The Yakuza have a word for it: Shima. The zone of the death. It's different from Shaba, the normal world.

We no longer live in the normal world, Jean.

Underground...

CLOSED

Salem Center Station.

In the outside world, battle lines are being drawn.

On one side, forces that would pit mutant against mutant. Clans formed to divide and conquer mutantkind. People who want mutants to destroy themselves.

On the other side...

Us.

The X-Men have always been about helping the weak, the powerless, the oppressed. Now it's time we help ourselves and people like ourselves. People like you.

We offer sanctuary here. Safety. And strength in numbers. At some point we must strike back at the forces trying to crush us, but for now we recruit and regroup.

The X-Men have never answered to anyone. We are a masterless clan. We are freedom fighters. We are rebels.

We are Ronin. Join us.

Going somewhere, Ororo?

Yes, Toad-sensei...

I am going to invite a friend to join us. His name is Forge. He... is on the other side, but I would like to try and bring him back.

Ah, I see.

Well, if you are going above you should bring someone with you. Just to be safe.

No... I would like to do this on my own.

I will be all right.

Very well then. Take care.

And hurry back.

End